

MUNICÍPIO DE LOURES



We are living very difficult times, in which the COVID-19 pandemic must be faced with tenacity and solidarity.

As for other public institutions, for Loures City Hall this has been the priority of our work in the last days and weeks, in order to fulfil the determinations of the health authorities and respond to the demands, as well: first the state of alertness and then the state of emergency, decreed by the President of Portuguese Republic.

We have been working to maintain essential services for the population and, at the same time, guarantee protection measures for employees and people who live in our Municipality.

Loures City Hall was one of the first entities in the country to approve its contingency plan, as well as to articulate its intervention with the health authorities, in order to have the maximum effectiveness in combating the above mentioned pandemic.

Thus, we determined the closure of a set of services and public facilities, which cannot work at this moment, and some of them have not worked even for several days.

We reinforced telephone and digital assistance, seeking to eliminate face-to-face assistance and, with this, also protected employees and populations.

The Municipality of Loures has been taking steps to strengthen essential services in support of populations and health authorities. Mainly in the areas of civil protection, health services and others, essential for this functioning.

We have been guaranteeing, with all regularity, the water supply and waste collection with the strong commitment of our workers.

However, we are also guaranteeing school meals, as determined by the Portuguese Government, for children included in support level A, as well as the opening of educational establishments for the children of workers in essential functions, in particular health workers.

We proposed to Social Security that the above offer be guaranteed also in nursery level. In what concerns this assistance, there were already mobilized two Private Social Solidarity Institutions (PSSI) in our Municipality, to ensure that the children of essential service workers, aged to be in the nursery centre, can have this service which is also very important at the moment.

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We went forward with measures to ensure the support chains for homeless people wouldn't be interrupted, and the same could continue even under conditions of relative normality.

In addition, we are accelerating payments to external entities, in particular to our suppliers, to lessen the economic impact that this situation is having on all of them.

We increased and extended the payment period for the water invoice to more than 40 days, in order to avoid people from going out, if necessary, to pay the mentioned invoice.

We are already acting in coordination with other entities. With the parish councils, particularly, in the sense of a more local answers to a set of needs for essential services, namely the healthy authorities.

Nevertheless, we are coordinating, with the other municipalities in the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon, the attempt to import essential protection goods, which are currently lacking and other measures, in order to penalize people and companies as less as possible, in this very difficult phase.

For those who are quarantined, we are also trying to keep them entertained through the consultation on the social networks of our museums, libraries and galleries, with activities and videos that seek to alleviate this difficult time.

In fact, I would like to emphasise and underline the great responsibility and sense of public service that all municipal services had. Our Municipality employees have selflessly managed to respond to all these needs, find innovative solutions to problems that arise, and thus fulfil their duties towards the population, that is in need at the moment of all public services.

In the coming days, we will be taking yet another set of measures, which are already being finalised, and which are essential to face the following phases of this pandemic. One of them is the reinforcement of the social emergency fund, to expand support to Private Social Solidarity Institutions, firefighters and other entities, especially to address the needs of the elderly and the most vulnerable people.

Also in relation to the firefighters, particularly necessary at this time that we are experiencing, we will anticipate the financial transfers, already next

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week, referring to the months of April and May, thus allowing them to have a working capital to resolve situations that are currently arising.

In addition, we will continue to support social entities, as well as the others, in pursuing their fundamental objectives at this stage.

However, it is necessary to provide health authorities with all the necessary support, both for current phase, but above all, for the following stages of the virus' spread and the response that needs to be given.

At this moment, we already have plans and in preparation for the coming days, if necessary, with facilities to screen cases that the health authorities indicate for COVID-19; to accommodate, if necessary, patients who do not need to be in hospital, but also to meet the needs of accommodation and meals for health professionals and other essential services.

We are also prepared to support health centres in the areas of psychology, administrative assistance and communication, in order to maximize their capacity and to supply some absences that eventually occur in this situation.

We are also preparing, for the next few days, a decision to extend and postpone deadlines for the fulfilment of obligations to the Municipality: deadlines in the areas of urbanism, deadlines for rent payments and other matters, that are now difficult to meet and we do not want people are harmed for not doing so at the foreseen time We will make this decision briefly to reassure all those who are in this situation.

On the other hand, we are already establishing, with some commercial areas or commercial distribution, priority schedules for the security forces, civil protection forces and health workers, in order they can stock up quickly and without having to wait a lot, given their particularly important functions at this moment in the life of our society.

And we are also thinking about the future. We need to start preparing to get out of this pandemic situation and counteract the economic impact it will have. Therefore, we are preparing measures and studying them, together with the other municipalities in the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon, in order to be able to intervene in the water invoice, as well as in the elimination or temporary exemption of some fees, and in other measures that may contribute to boost economic activity.

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In what concerns the functioning of the Municipality, we are also trying to keep the processes active, so that, as soon as this contingency situation ends, we could resume, with all energy, the Municipal Activity, the works, the activities, in order to contribute to the recovery of the economy, that will be so necessary, when we leave this period of special contingency in which we are living.

Finally, I would like to leave a very strong appeal for you to follow all the recommendations of the health authorities, of security forces, that the determinations of the Portuguese Government and other entities have made in the last few days be fulfilled, because that is the way we have to face this pandemic situation, seeking to limit contagion and also to keep the essential services functioning.

I also would like to send you a message of great confidence. We will be able to face this situation. We will be able to overcome it and then we will be able to deal with its consequences with great determination, great enthusiasm, with a great desire to advance our Municipality and our Country.

The mayor of Loures

Bernardino Soares